

ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

By THEODORE SCHROEDER

In the American Historical Magazine, Theodore Schroeder, a former Salt Lake, contributes an interesting article on the origin of the Book of Mormon. The first installment was printed in The Tribune of December 1, the second one December 8. The conclusion of the paper follows.

Our fourth witness is John N. Miller, who was employed by Spaulding and Lake at Conneaut and boarded at the former's home. Miller says: "He (Spaulding) had written two or three books or pamphlets on different subjects, but that which more particularly drew my attention was the one which he called the 'Manuscript Found.' From this he would frequently read some humorous passages to the company present. It purported to be the history of the first settlement of America before discovered by Columbus. He brought them off from Jerusalem under their leaders, detailing their travels by land and water, their manners, customs, laws, wars, etc. He said that he designed it as a historical novel, and that in after years it would be believed by many people as much as the history of England. He soon after failed in business, and he told me he should retire from the din of his creditors, finish his book, and have it published, which would enable him to pay his debts and support his family. He soon after removed to Pittsburgh, as I understood. I have recently examined the Book of Mormon, and find in it the writings of Solomon Spaulding from beginning to end, but mixed up with Scripture and other religious matters which I did not meet with in the 'Manuscript Found.' Many of the passages in the Mormon book are verbatim from Spaulding, and others in part. The names of Nephi, Lehi, Moroni, and, in fact, all the principal names are brought fresh to my recollection by the Golden Bible. When Spaulding divested his history of its fabulous names by a verbal explanation, he landed his people near the Straits of Darien, which I am very confident he called Zarahemla; they were marched about that country for a length of time in which wars and great bloodshed ensued. He brought them across North America in a northeast direction."

JOHN N. MILLER.

Our fifth witness is Aaron Wright, who says: "I first became acquainted with Solomon Spaulding in 1808 or 1809, when he commenced building a forge on Conneaut creek. When at his house one day, he showed and read to me a history he was writing of the lost tribes of Israel, purporting that they were the first settlers of America, and that the Indians were their descendants. Upon this subject we had frequent conversations. He traced their journey from Jerusalem to America as it is given in the Book of Mormon, excepting the religious matter. The historical part of the Book of Mormon I know to be the same as I read and heard read from the writings of Spaulding more than twenty years ago; the names are especially the same, without any alteration. He told me his object was to account for all the fortifications, etc., to be found in this country, and said that in time it would be fully believed by all except learned men and historians. I once anticipated his writings in print, but little expected to see them in a 'new Bible.' Spaulding had many other manuscripts which I expect to see when Smith translates his other plate. In conclusion I will observe that the names of, and most of the historical part of the Book of Mormon, were as familiar to me before I read it as most modern history. If it is not Spaulding's writing, it is the same as he wrote; and if Smith was inspired, I think it was by the same spirit that Spaulding was, which he confessed to be the love of money."

AARON WRIGHT.

Our sixth witness is Oliver Smith, who testifies: "When Solomon Spaulding first came to this place (Conneaut), he purchased a tract of land, surveyed it out, and commenced selling it. While engaged in this business he boarded at my house, in all nearly six months. All his leisure hours were occupied in writing a historical novel founded upon the first settlers of this country. He said he intended to trace their journey from Jerusalem by land and sea, till their arrival in America, and give an account of their arts, sciences, civilization, wars and contentions. In this way he would give a satisfactory account of all the old mounds so common to this country. During the time he was at my house I read and heard read 100 pages or more. Nephi and Lehi were by him represented as leading characters when they first started for America. Their main object was to escape the judgments which they supposed were coming upon the old world. But no religious matter was introduced, as I now recollect. When I heard the historical part of it related, I at once said it was the writings of Solomon Spaulding. Soon after I obtained the book, and on reading it, found much of it the same as Spaulding had written more than twenty years before."

OLIVER SMITH.

Our seventh witness, Nahum How-

ard, avers this: "I first became acquainted with Solomon Spaulding in December, 1810. After that time I frequently saw him at his house, and also at my house. I once, in conversation with him, expressed a surprise at not having any account of the inhabitants once in this country who created the old forts, mounds, etc. He then told me that he was writing a history of that race of people, and afterward frequently showed me his writings, which I read. I have lately read the Book of Mormon, and believe it to be the same as Spaulding wrote, except the religious part. He told me that he intended to get his writings published in Pittsburgh, and he thought that in one century from that time it would be believed as much as any other history."

NAHUM HOWARD.

Our eighth witness is Artemus Cunningham, whose evidence reads thus: "In the month of October, 1811, I went from the township of Madison to Conneaut, for the purpose of securing a debt due me from Solomon Spaulding. I tarried with him nearly two days for the purpose of accomplishing my object, which I was finally unable to do. His only hope of ever paying his debts appeared to be upon the sale of a book which he had been writing. He endeavored to convince me from the nature and character of the work that it would meet with a ready sale. Before showing me his manuscripts, he went into a verbal relation of its outline, saying that it was a fabulous or romantic history of the first settlement of this country, and as it purported to have been a record found buried in the earth, or in a cave, he had adopted the ancient or scripture style of writing. He then presented his manuscripts, when we sat down and spent a good share of the night in reading them and conversing upon them. I will remember the name of Nephi, which appeared to be the principal hero of the story. The frequent repetition of the phrase, 'I, Nephi,' I recollect as distinctly as though it was but yesterday, although the general features of the story have passed from my memory through the lapse of twenty-two years. He attempted to account for the numerous antiquities which are found upon this continent, and remarked that after this generation had passed away, his account of the first inhabitants of America would be considered as authentic as any other history. The Mormon Bible I have partially examined, and am fully of the opinion that Solomon Spaulding had written its outlines before he left Conneaut" (151).

After the publication of the foregoing evidence (1834) "Apostle" Orson Hyde went to Conneaut, evidently to secure impeaching or contradicting testimony. He received so little comfort that not even a public mention of the trip was made by him until 1841, while he was in London (152).

Our ninth witness upon the facts showing the plagiarism of the Book of Mormon from the Spaulding manuscript is Mr. Joseph Miller. He was intimately acquainted with Solomon Spaulding during all of the time while the latter resided at Amity, Pa., 1814-16 (153). Mr. Miller's testimony is preserved in the Pittsburgh Telegraph of February 6, 1879, from which the following is pertinent:

On hearing read the account from the book (of Mormon) of the battle between the Amlicites and the Nephites (Book of Alma, Chapter 1—Chapter 3, Edition of '38), in which the soldiers of one army had placed a red mark on their foreheads to distinguish them from their enemies, it seems to reproduce in my mind, not only the narration, but the very words, as they had been impressed upon my mind by the reading of Spaulding's manuscript.

Our tenth witness is Rodick McKee, whose evidence upon another point we have already used. Under date of Washington, D. C., April 14, 1869, published in the Washington (Pa.) Reporter for April 21, 1869, he says:

In the fall of 1814 I arrived in the village of "Good Will" and for eighteen or twenty months sold goods in the store previously occupied by Mr. Thomas Brice. It was on Main street, a few doors west of Spaulding's Tavern, where I was a boarder. With both Mr. Solomon Spaulding and his wife I was quite intimately acquainted. I recollect quite well Mr. Spaulding spending much time in writing (on sheets of paper torn out of an old book) what purported to be a veritable history of the nations or tribes who inhabited Canaan. He called it "Lost History Found," "Lost Manuscript," or some such name, not disguising that it was wholly a work of the imagination, written to amuse himself and without any immediate view to publication. I was struck with the minuteness of his details and the apparent truthfulness and sincerity of the author. I have an indistinct recollection of the passage referred to by Mr. Miller about the Amlicites making a cross with red paint on their foreheads to distinguish them from enemies in the confusion of battle.

The eleventh witness is the Rev. Abner Jackson, who, when but a boy and confined with a lame knee, heard Solomon Spaulding read to his father much of the former's story, and also heard him give an outline of the whole. Mr. Jackson, under date of December 20, 1830, made the following state-

ment to the Washington county, Pa., Reporter of January 7, 1831 (154):

Spaulding frequently read his manuscript to the neighbors and amused them as he progressed with the work. He wrote it in Bible style. "And it came to pass" occurred so often that some called him "Old Come-to-pass." The Book of Mormon follows the romance too closely to be a stranger. In both, many persons appear having the same name, as Moroni, Mormon, Nephites, Laman, Lamanites, Nephil, and others. Here we are presented with romance second called the Book of Mormon, telling the same story of the same people, traveling from the same plain, in the same way, having the same difficulties and destination, with the same wars, same battles and same results, with thousands upon thousands slain. Then see the Mormon account of the last battle at Cumorah, where all the righteous were slain. How much this resembles the closing scene in the "Manuscript Found." The most singular part of the whole matter is that it follows the romance so closely, with this difference: The first claims to be a romance, the second claims to be a revelation of God, a new Bible. When it was brought to Conneaut and read there in public, old Squire Wright heard it and exclaimed, "Old Come-to-pass has come to life again." Here was the place where Spaulding wrote and read his manuscript to the neighbors for their amusement, and Squire Wright had often heard him read from his romance. This was in 1832, sixteen years after Spaulding's death. This Squire Wright lived on a little farm just outside of the little village. I was acquainted with him for twenty-five years. I lived on his farm when I was a boy and attended school in his village. I am particular to notice these things to show that I had an opportunity of knowing what I am writing about.

Squire Wright, referred to in Mr. Jackson's statement, is the same Aaron Wright who was our fifth witness upon the question of identity.

Last, but not least, we introduce John C. Bennett. He says he joined the Mormons in order to enable himself to expose their iniquity. He was quartermaster general of Illinois, the Mayor of Nauvoo, a master in chancery for Hancock county, Ill., appointed by then Judge Stephen A. Douglas, a trustee for the "University of the City of Nauvoo," the recipient of special mention in revelation purporting to come direct from God, as well as innumerable encomiums from church leaders and the church organ. The Mormon people have called Bennett more kinds of a liar, it seems to me, than any man was ever called before. When Mormons are asked just what statement of Bennett's warrants the charge, they usually confess they never read his book. In the light of subsequent history and later church admissions, there is not one of Bennett's innumerable charges of almost unbelievable iniquity which I cannot demonstrate to be substantially true as to the character of the iniquity, if not the special manifestation of it, and do so wholly from the evidence of Mormon church publications. I, therefore, believe what Bennett says, and here quote so much of his testimony as relates to the origin of the Book of Mormon. He says:

I will remark here in confirmation of the above (having quoted a small part of the statements herein last above quoted) that the Book of Mormon was originally written by the Rev. Solomon Spaulding, A. M., as a romance and entitled the "Manuscript Found," and placed by him in the printing office of Patterson and Lambdin in the city of Pittsburgh, from whence it was taken by a conspicuous Mormon divine and remodeled by adding the religious portion, placed by him in Smith's possession, and then published to the world as the testimony exemplified. This I have from the confederation, and of its perfect correctness there is not the shadow of a doubt. There never were any plates of the Book of Mormon excepting what were seen by the spiritual and not the natural eyes of the witnesses. The story of the plates is all chimerical. (155)

It will be observed Bennett does not name Rigdon or Pratt in his statement. The reason is apparent from reading certain correspondence published in the book from which it appears that at the same time of writing he entertained a reasonable hope that Sidney Rigdon and the Pratts would leave the church and join him in his anti-Mormon crusade, and he probably did not wish to unduly embarrass his supposed confederates, who were still apparently within the fold.

For the Love of Gold, Not God.

With the exception of establishing the motive, our case is now complete. The natural inference, of course, is that the greed for gain furnished the dynamics of the scheme, but we must not leave even this fact without direct evidence. Mormons point to the violent death of Smith as a martyrdom, and assume this a sufficient answer to the charge of selfishness. A man who, as was the case with Smith, dies with a six-shooter in his own hand, firing it at his assailants (156), is in a novel pose for a martyr, and yet we may admit that Smith would not from selfish ends have chosen a career of imposture had he in the beginning been able to foresee his ignominious end.

Soon after Rigdon's visit to Smith and the reception of the revelation making Kirtland the gathering place of the "Saints," Smith's family, together with their followers, moved to Ohio. Revelations now came thick and fast, and of such a character as to

demonstrate that the love of gold, and not God, was the inducing cause of their existence. I quote a few pertinent samples:

Whoso receiveth you receiveth me, and the same will feed you and clothe you and give you money—and he who doeth not these things is not my disciple. (157)

It is wisdom in me that my servant Martin Harris should be an example unto the church in laying his money before the bishop of the church. And also this is a law unto every man that cometh unto this land to receive an inheritance, and he shall do with his money according as the law directs. (158)

And let all the monies which can be spared, it mattereth not unto me whether it be little or much, be sent up unto the land of Zion unto those I have appointed to receive it. (159)

And let all those who have not families, who receive monies, send it up unto the Bishop of Zion. (160)

Behold, this is my will obtaining monies even as I have directed. (161)

Impart a portion of thy property; yea, even part of thy lands, and all save the support of thy family. (162)

Verily thus saith the Lord, I require all their surplus property to be put into the hands of the bishop of my church of Zion. (163)

And in temporal labor thou (Smith, the athlete,) shall not give strength, for this is not thy calling. (164)

They shall support thee and I will bless them both spiritually and temporally. (165)

If ye desire the mysteries of the kingdom, provide for Him (Smith) food and raiment and whatsoever he needeth to accomplish the work. (166)

He who feeds you, or clothe you, or gives you money shall in no wise lose his reward. (167)

He that sendeth up treasures unto the land of Zion shall receive an inheritance in this world. (168)

I command that thou shall not covet thine own property. (169)

"Your money or your damnation" has about as much ethical sanction as the less pretentious demand of the highwayman who says, "Your money or your life." But we have not yet reached the end. The "Prophet's" father, who, prior to the discovery of the alleged divine mission of his son, eked out only a scanty living as a dispenser of cake and root beer (170), now became the dispenser of patriarchal blessings at \$10 per week and expenses (171), and later at \$3 per blessing. (172)

The prophet's brothers and friends received a gift of real estate by revelation (173), and another brother of the prophet was retained in a holy office, though confessedly concealing his property to cheat his creditors. (174)

These are a part, and by no means all of the evidence tending to establish that a desire for money was the inspiring cause of every act of the Mormon prophet, the very divinity that moulded his thoughts and revelations, and brought into being Mormon books. Before becoming a prophet Joseph Smith's earning capacity as a peep-stone money digger was \$14 per month. (175) Soon after becoming a prophet he became president of a bank, (176). In 1842 the prophet, (together with his brother Hyrum and Sidney Rigdon) took advantage of the bankruptcy law to avoid creditors, whose claims amounted to \$100,000. (177) A few years later the prophet was killed, he being at the time the richest man in Nauvoo.

Through the whole story of their lives, if we may believe their alleged revelations to come from on high, God manifests in the conspirators' behalf a greed for earthly prosperity which would disgrace any decent man who should attempt to gratify it at the expense of a like number of poverty-stricken, ignorant unfortunates.

It is perhaps a work of supererogation, yet I cannot readily resist calling attention to the human side of the conspirators, when they came to fall out, over the division of the spoils. Many, even Brigham Young included, suspected Joseph Smith of misappropriating church money. (178) Brigham, however, had all his suspicions allayed, for the Lord actually put money into his trunk. (179) This would of course, be very convincing evidence that a man might have much money without misappropriating anything, even though a bank established by revelation (180), should a few months later fail with \$150,000 of liabilities and practically no assets, and after only eight months of business. (181)

At one time Cowdery, a witness to the divinity of the Book of Mormon, invited suspicion that he was converting more than his share of the spoils, and the following revelation was the result:

It is not wisdom in me that he (Cowdery) should be entrusted with the commandments, and the monies which he shall carry unto the land of Zion, except one go with him who will be true and faithful. (182)

The most forceful incident of this sort, however, occurred as the result of jealousy between Rigdon and Smith, which manifests itself in scores of ways all through their lives. When Rigdon, on his visit to the prophet in New York, desires to be proclaimed a translator of remaining plates given by the angel to Smith, and as having the same power as Joseph Smith, the former's ambitions are quietly squelched by a revelation from God to Rigdon, saying: "It is not expedient in me that ye should translate